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SUBJECT: A/S HARTY'S MEETINGS WITH TURKISH OFFICIALS STRIKE
OPTIMISTIC TONE ON US-TURKISH PARTNERSHIP

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11. (SBU) Summary. A/S Harty met with senior Turkish officials from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Foreign Affairs during a visit to Ankara on March 6. Expressing gratitude for Turkey's recent efforts to resolve a number of high profile child abduction cases, A/S Harty also conveyed the urgent need for the Turkish parliament to pass implementing legislation for The Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. A/S Harty thanked Turkish officials for their assistance to American citizens in Turkey, underscoring the GOT's extraordinary efforts in processing almost two thousand American citizen evacuees from Lebanon through the port of Mersin last July. End Summary.

'WHEN' NOT 'IF' IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION PASSES

12. (SBU) Acknowledging Turkey's steady progress towards full compliance with The Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, A/S Harty emphasized to Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Deputy Undersecretary Sadi Guven the need for the Turkish parliament to pass implementing legislation sooner rather than later. Citing upcoming elections and a shortened parliamentary session as likely impediments to the legislation's passage this term, Guven assured A/S Harty that The Hague Convention has the full force of law in Turkey, despite the absence of implementing legislation, and expressed confidence in the legislation's passage, if not this term, certainly in the near future.

13. (U) Reflecting on the positive working relationship between the MOJ and the US Mission in handling child abduction cases, A/S Harty praised Judge Aykut Kilic for his tireless efforts in helping to resolve a number of difficult cases this past year, in particular his crucial role in achieving a successful resolution to the high profile and contentious Ciloglu case this past December (see reftel).

14. (U) A/S Harty detailed the proactive role Consular Affairs undertakes to educate US judges and their law clerks on Hague Convention obligations to ensure efficient and informed processing of Hague cases in the United States. Noting most judges' preference to learn about legal issues from their peers, A/S Harty described the Hague Permanent Bureau-sponsored (HPB) training sessions that take place in the United States and internationally. Guven was receptive to A/S Harty's offer to work with the HPB to arrange for judges versed in The Hague Convention to travel to Turkey to train their Turkish counterparts. Referring to the Embassy's current sponsorship of a 15-week English language training course in Turkey for eight local judges, Guven expressed appreciation for the US commitment to fostering improved communication on Hague cases.

PRAISE FOR GOT'S ASSISTANCE TO AMCITS

15. (U) A/S Harty informed Ministry of Interior Undersecretary Sahabettin Harput that the United States expects approximately a half million American citizens to travel to Turkey in 2007, nearly double the number who visited in 2005. Welcoming this news, Harput remarked that many Americans, after spending time in Turkey, frequently commented on their changed perceptions of the country after visiting and getting to know Turkish people. A/S Harty shared with Harput the belief that the best commercial for America is America, and that the same clearly holds true for Turkey. With twelve thousand Turkish students currently studying in the United States, A/S Harty enthusiastically noted that more university students come to America from Turkey than any other country in Europe and she hoped that number would continue to rise.

16. (U) A/S Harty warmly thanked Harput for the professionalism, efficiency, and courtesy Turkish officials display in providing assistance to Americans when they are injured or become crime victims. In particular, she praised the high standard of service shown to the almost two thousand Americans who evacuated through the port of Mersin from Lebanon last July, despite the overwhelming workload and unexpected circumstances Turkish officials' faced. Describing CA's oral history project of the evacuation effort that is currently underway, A/S Harty explained CA's intention to not only document the extraordinary contributions of those who participated in the evacuation, but to use it also as a training tool for handling crises of that magnitude in the future. Quoting Ataturk ("Liberty and freedom are two aspects of my character"), Harput insisted it only natural for Turkey to assist Americans given Turkey's embrace of all individuals regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

US-Turkish Relationship Valued in Turkey

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17. (U) Deputy Undersecretary for Consular Affairs Ambassador Ugur Dogan assured A/S Harty that whatever happens in Turkey, Turks' favorable attitude towards Americans would not change given the value and importance Turks place on the US-Turkish relationship. On a personal note, he shared the reservations he had about sending his three children to study at universities in the United States after 9/11, fearing their possible mistreatment or discrimination for being foreigners from a Muslim country. He noted such fears were unwarranted, and that on a person-to-person basis Turks' attitude toward Americans would remain positive because "deep down Turks are very fond of Americans." Just as thousands of Turkish students study in the United States each year, Dogan hoped that more American students would consider attending university in Turkey.

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